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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID AND OFDA

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SUBJECT: Transitioning Northern Uganda - One Year of OTI Activities

¶1. Summary: In June of 2008 USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) opened the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative (NUTI) program in support of U.S. Government objectives to facilitate the transition from relief to humanitarian recovery in the North. Managed out of the USAID mission but operationally based in Gulu, OTI's program has focused on assisting local government, traditional and civil society leaders in their efforts to build public confidence in the peace that has returned to Northern Uganda. Moreover, OTI activities, which provided a kick-start to many recovery efforts are being reinforced by larger reconstruction initiatives coming online. End Summary.

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Seeing, Hearing and Feeling the Transition
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¶2. The Northern Uganda Transition Initiative was started to fill a gap in programming that often occurs at the beginning of a peace process, democratic change or other transitional windows of opportunity. OTI decided to open a program to support the USG in promoting lasting stability in Northern Central Uganda (Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum and Pader Districts). The program, which quickly awards small in-kind grants to active local partners on the ground, focuses on three objectives:

- Increase the visibility of and confidence in the government of Uganda
- Increase access to information on peace, recovery and development
- Support truth and reconciliation processes

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Painting by Numbers
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¶3. Since the program began in June 2008, USAID/OTI has funded 94 small grants totaling \$4,140,000. These grants involved as many people as possible in reconstruction, rehabilitation and peace and reconciliation activities.

¶4. In a nutshell, OTI activities included:

97,000 direct beneficiaries; rehabilitated 262 infrastructure items in return areas; supported 533 government engagements with their communities to resolve issues or consult on priorities; and sponsored 1136 radio spots on returns, peace, recovery, and reconciliation.

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Seeing is Believing
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¶5. OTI supports the sub-county leaders in areas of high returns through a participatory approach, sitting with government and deciding together their needs and priorities. This demonstrates to

the population that the government is in control and is striving to deliver services. Reconstruction is focused on markets, schools, health centers, water sources, and government offices.

¶16. An example of this is the Odek Primary 7 school. This was the school LRA leader Joseph Kony attended. The rehabilitation includes classroom blocks, teacher housing, latrines, and a kitchen in a very visible and symbolic statement that recovery has arrived even to the heart of where the rebellion started.

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The More You Know...
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¶17. OTI is helping to deliver the message that the conflict is over in Northern Uganda through support to media and strategic communications initiatives. Residents of northern Uganda receive their information from radio. OTI is therefore providing both institutional support to ten radio stations and working with them to communicate messages on peace, reconciliation and recovery to a wide audience.

¶18. As an example, OTI is funding a soap opera series with 16 episodes that is playing over 400 times across various radio stations. This series provides a creative format for returnees to interact on serious social issues, including domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, conflict resolution at the village level, and re-establishment of cultural norms.

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Let Us Heal, Learn and Celebrate
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¶19. The returnees have increasingly expressed a need for cultural solutions to social issues such as conflict resolution, cleansing and healing, and the celebration of peace. OTI is supporting the Acholi Paramount Chief and other respected cultural organizations to breathe life back into the cultural practices, many of which were eroded when residents were moved into IDP camps.

¶10. An example of this occurred as returnees found bodies of those killed during the conflict on their land. Traditional leaders must cleanse the land and re-bury the bones to allow the returnees to be free from the trauma of the conflict that they often describe as ghosts of those killed. To date, OTI has supported local traditional leaders in this process in over 80 ceremonies. Another example is OTI's support for the traditional way of passing on oral tradition from elder to youth. It is done fireside at night. OTI is supporting 12 of these events.

¶11. OTI supported a dance competition between all the sub-counties in Gulu district to revive Acholi dance customs and bring communities together. Over 40 different groups vied for the title of best dancers. The events brought together thousands of people in a celebration of peace and cultural revitalization. This event will be repeated in Amuru, Kitgum and Pader soon.

¶12. OTI has also been supporting the GoUs Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) in their process toward fulfilling Annexure III of the Juba peace agreements. We have funded the US Based Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG) to carry out sensitization of the new War Crimes law in four regions of the country. We are also supporting the JLOS study tour of Northern Uganda focusing on gathering information for traditional justice mechanisms to be incorporated into the Ugandan legal framework. This project is receiving a majority of funding from Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, with logistics and coordination carried out by OTI. OTI also funded the Northern Uganda Transitional Justice Working Group (NUTJWG) as they carry out their annual meeting focusing on the role of civil society in the truth and reconciliation process. Finally, OTI supported a meeting between cultural and political leadership focusing on solving land disputes.

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Music, Theater and Sports
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¶13. At request from the District offices OTI funded sporting events, music events and theater productions to provide opportunity for the youth to engage in cathartic entertainment activities and bring a sense of normalcy back in the daily lives of the returnees.

¶14. OTI supported a series of 20 concerts. These concerts titled Peace and Love at Home brought together rock and rap bands from Acholi to deliver entertainment and messages of peace. They were attended by thousands of residents. According to one concertgoer: I have never seen this many people together outside of a food distribution.

¶15. At the request of Gulu District Sports Office, OTI rehabilitated 11 soccer fields for District-sponsored soccer matches among the youth - purchasing balls, uniforms, shoes and medals. The Federation of Uganda Football Association (FUFA) held a tournament in the north and a sub-subsequent celebration for the victors in Kitgum with OTI support.

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Breaking the Ground
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¶16. Our programs have kick started/led the way for other donor activities that are soon to come online and continued USG development initiatives that have totaled 160 million dollars a year since FY07. These new activities include: DFIDs new 100 million pounds programming for the north; a \$100 million World Bank reconstruction program (NUSAF II) set to start later this year; a promised \$200 million GoU funded initiative as part of their commitment to the Peace Recovery and Development Program (PRDP), and a large Japanese Government (JICA) reconstruction program.

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Coordination with Other USAID Programs
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¶17. OTI partners with many other USAID programs, adding value and serving as an opportunity to learn and try out new ideas. These mission programs include: NUDEIL - focusing on northern reconstruction; NUWSSP - focusing on water for Kitgum and Pader

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districts; UNITY - the flagship education program; and SPRING - the mission's social transition program, among others.

¶18. One significant and symbolic project is the building of the Amuru district engineers office and government staff housing in the newly created Amuru District. Currently much of Amuru business is conducted in Gulu due to a lack of government facilities. Supporting Amuru government infrastructure has helped make returnees more comfortable with returning to the area and gives provides better access to services.

¶19. At the request of Gulu and Amuru Chief Administrative Officers (CAO), OTI supported the Districts needs for technological expertise for engineering activities through the purchased 20 computers and is offering specialized training in AUTOCAD (sophisticated engineering software) and other engineering software to the Gulu and Amuru district engineering staff.

¶20. The Gulu and Amuru District Engineers expressed the need for additional staff to allow time to plan reconstruction efforts and alleviate a severe workload backlog. OTI supported this request through the hiring of two additional engineers per district.

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Comment
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¶21. With support from OTIs quick impact and highly participatory activities, the norths transition from conflict to stability is

marching forward. The 80% return rate of IDPs to or near their homes, provided by the UN and the local government, indicates that returnees confidence in peace and government efforts is high. We expect that with larger reconstruction activities coming online, the progress made by OTIs quick transition activities will be cemented and reinforced.

BROWNING